

MEDREGION UPDATE

Regional Office Tunis

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MEPI in 2010— Apply for a Grant!

•The Tunis Regional Office has around \$2 million to support grants in the region.

•Make this the year to become involved with your community...and MEPI activities!

MEPI: Enhancing the Civil Society Role in the BMENA Democratization Process in

By Wahid Labidi



A group photo of the participants

The Lebanese Permanent Peace Movement NGO, the Yemeni Human Rights Information and Training Center, and the Egyptian Arab Program for Human Rights Activists in Egypt organized a Scientific Symposium in Beirut in October 2009.

The event, which was funded by MEPI, brought together around fifty Arab participants from several Arab countries, to evaluate the progress of the democratic reform process in the Arab region and enhance the role of civil society in contributing to democratization in the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA).

The Symposium was a real

success, and contributed to the debate about democratic reform in the Arab region.

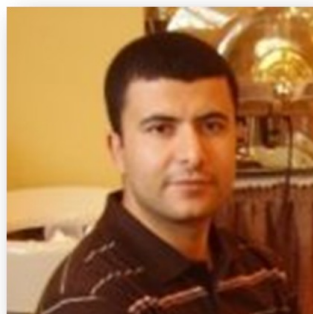
Participants reviewed the outcome of ten field studies on democratic reform conducted in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestinian Territories and identified priorities in each target country. The reviewed studies were compiled in one comprehensive report that was later submitted and considered by the civil society preparatory meeting to the 6th Forum for the Future.

Following the evaluation, participants launched a call to Arab civil society and reform

activists to strengthen their performance in driving democratic transformation and address a crucial need to foster cooperation between civil society activists, as well as focusing on the identified priorities of each target country. "Civil Society shall assume an active role in fostering reform in the Arab region. It is vital to build a partnership spirit with government, but civil society should remain a free and independent actor" said Mr. Fadi Abi Allam, President of Permanent Peace Movement, Lebanon. ■

Welcome to our New MEPI Member

MEPI Regional Office, Tunis is very pleased to welcome our new colleague Imed Brahim who joined us as the new Grants Management Assistant. Imed started his career by working as Administrative Assistant at the U.S. Government Employee Recreation Association. At the U.S. Embassy Tunis, in 2004, Imed joined the U.S State Department and worked in the Financial Management Office as a Financial Assistant. Imed has a Bachelors Degree in Accounting and he is currently



A warm welcome to Imed Brahim

studying for a Masters Degree in Accounting and Audit.

Imed Brahim joins Nadim, Val and Wassila in the MEPI Grants Unit. ■

Your Voice. Your Video. Democracy Video Contest



Create a video short that completes the phrase:
"Democracy is..."

SUBMISSION DEADLINE JANUARY 31, 2010

Winners will be awarded: an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, New York and Hollywood to attend gala screenings of the winning videos, gain exposure to the U.S. film and television industry and meet with creative talent, democracy advocates and government leaders.

To learn more please visit:

www.videochallenge.america.gov



By the MEPI Grants Unit

Travel Authorization versus Notification

There are many travel related regulations that can be found in the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) [here](#). One of the important, yet neglected rules in grant related travels is the travel notification and authorization. In deed, MEPI requires either notification or authorization for all international air and/or train travel supported by the award. International travel is defined as travel between countries.

When travel is included in the approved award, it should be considered as having received prior authorization from the Grants Officer if the award documentation (budget or SOW) includes specific information regarding the purpose of the travel (number of travelers; number of trips, destinations; and an estimate of trip costs). In this case only a notification is needed. Your Grants Officer will need to be notified of travel it previously authorized. A simple email will do. Make sure to send it soon enough for processing (at least two weeks prior to travel and before the air tickets have been purchased). This email should include the following:

- Names and nationalities of travelers;
- Airfares;
- Hotel rates;
- Meals & incidental expenses rates (M&IE);
- Destination(s); and,
- purpose of travel including a notional agenda.

The email should include a reference to the specific budget line covering this travel. If after two business days no response is provided, the implementer can presume that no issues or concerns exist and commence travel. The GO reserves the right to decline implementer travel for those notifications received less than two weeks prior to the proposed travel date.

In the case travel has not been specifically identified in the approved award, as outlined above, it then requires authorization by the GO. Implementers must request authorization from the GO in the same conditions of notifications; except that travel cannot commence without having received written approval from the GO. Any costs of travel not identified in the award and not approved by the GO will be disallowed.

Because non planned travel will need an authorization, it will put the logistics of the implementer on hold waiting for authorization. Very often, it is in the stressful period of preparation of conferences or seminars that this happens. That's why it is important to identify exactly your travel needs in the pre-award phase whenever it is possible. ■

MEPI Promoting Peaceful Conflict Resolution

January 18, Martin Luther King Day

"It is no longer a choice between violence and nonviolence...it's nonviolence or nonexistence."

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

"The King and the Wise Boy" Play Promotes Non-violent Resolution Methods



A scene from "The King and the Wise Boy" Play

Basma Society for Culture and Arts (BSCA), a registered Palestinian NGO based in Gaza, chose to combat violence and promote the culture of tolerance through theater. BSCA implemented a MEPI-funded project called "Combating violence and enhancing the culture of tolerance and dialogue among the youth in Gaza strip". Through theatrical activities and workshops, the six-month project is instilling peaceful conflict resolution methods among Palestinian

youth in Gaza so that they efficiently contribute to their local community while warding off radicalism and promoting tolerance so as to bridge cultures.

BSCA launched its first activity through the performance of "The King and The Wise Boy" play. The play is the first of a series of 20 that have been performed in different parts in Gaza Strip. Basma produced 5000 brochures in both Arabic and English and 500 posters advertising the play's content and emphasizing the importance of democracy and tolerance. BSCA also produced 50 CDs to distribute to NGOs and schools so that other students from other educational institutions benefit from it. The CDs include the play and the workshops materials. All the promotional materials were distributed during the performances.

Each performance was followed by a workshop to discuss topics addressed in the play in order to broaden the knowledge of the participating

Basma Society for Culture and Arts (BSCA) is a non-profit community based organization, established in 1994, with the aim of activating the Palestinian cultural movement, and enable people access cultural and artistic activities through theatrical performances, video presentations, drama workshops, puppets theater for children, training courses and workshops to train actors, and cultural workshops. These activities are directed to all areas and groups of Gaza, with a concentration on children and youth.

www.basmaorg.org

youth.

To facilitate student involvement in the activities, BSCA Coordinated with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) department of education in Gaza to prepare the work sites. BSCA also held a meeting with the principal of human rights

branch of the UNRWA department of education. During the meeting BSCA members briefed the human rights branch representative on the nature, objectives, and activities of the project. The UNRWA representative also attended a rehearsal of the play.

The play was recognized by an extensive press coverage.

Martin Luther King was the Chief Spokesman for Nonviolent Activism in the Civil Rights Movement

On each third Monday of January, Americans honor the life and achievements of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968), the 1964 Nobel Peace laureate and the individual most associated with the triumphs of the African-American civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s. As a political organizer, supremely skilled orator and advocate of nonviolent protest, King was pivotal in persuading his fellow Americans to end the legal segregation that prevailed throughout the South and parts of other regions, and in sparking support for the civil rights legislation that established the legal framework for racial equality in the United States.

King was among those champions of justice whose influence transcended national boundaries. A student of the philosophy and principles of nonviolence enunciated by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), King in 1959 traveled to India, where he studied further the legacy of the man his widow, Coretta Scott King, later would call his "political mentor." Nelson Mandela, accepting the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize, similarly credited King as his predecessor in the effort to resolve justly the issues of racism and human dignity.

Read more: www.america.gov



A brochure produced by BSCA

MEPI Grantee 2AJ is Raising Citizenship and Civic Awareness Among Moroccan Youth

In partnership with the Moroccan Ministry of Education, the Association Action Jeunesse (2AJ) implemented a MEPI-funded project called “Al Mostaqbal.” The project is designed to increase political participation among Moroccan youth in high schools as well as encouraging school activities and participation in public service as a means to better contribute to improve local communities. 2AJ partnered with local NGOs to implement the Al Mostaqbal project in twelve high schools in six different cities in Morocco —Fes, Salé, Marrakech, Safi, Tangier and Casablanca.

2AJ started its activities implementation phase by conducting two workshops in the participating high schools. The first workshop was on leadership and political participation. The second one introduced the concepts of advocacy and lobbying as fundamentals of leadership. A total of 16,877 participants benefited from the workshops and activities that were presented to students.

In addition, 2AJ trained

representatives from local NGOs to be able to act as the direct executives of the project in each area, serving as mediators with local delegations of the Ministry of Education, as well as leading the “Election Day” events in each school.

2AJ produced 2000 copies of a 13-page animated information booklet that is addressed to students and local associations that work on local government.



The booklet, which is entitled “Fi Rihab Al Mouwatana”, sheds the light on the role of the parliament, government, and city councils while stressing the issue of citizenship and political participation.

Election Day in Participating High Schools:

In an effort to generate greater involvement among young people in the civil society and the democratic



The Election Day in a High School in Casablanca

process, Al Mostaqbal project held school elections, in which electoral campaigns were conducted and student councils elected. These elections provided students with practical opportunities to experience democracy in action and to practice what they have learned in a real world setting.

2AJ and volunteers helped the students prepare their electoral campaigns and programs and created voter registration cards and encouraged students to register to be able to vote for their favorite candidate.

Fifty student leaders were voted for in the day of the elections in all schools. Following the successful Election Day, 2AJ launched the Al Mostaqbal club, which is considered as the most prominent activity in the Al Mostaqbal program's agenda. Al Mostaqbal clubs are launched to better run the students activities in the schools. Students welcomed the idea, so much that, they came up with a larger notion of the project and called it: Al Mostaqbal Institute for Citizenship & Democracy. ■



Middle East Partnership Initiative

MEPI Regional Office, Tunis

Housed at the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, MEPI Regional Office Tunis, administers MEPI local programs in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and West Bank/Gaza, and accounts for more than \$2 million in program funding in 2010. In addition to coordinating with U.S. Embassies throughout the region, the Tunis RO organizes conferences (such as the Business Women's Summit and Student Leaders Alumni Conference), facilitates exchange programs (such as the Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program and the Students Leaders program), and provides a variety of funding opportunities (such as the MEPI Local Grants program and Civil Society Grants), as well as supporting visits, seminars, and training programs designed to advance reform.

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